

# Speech by Commissioner Phil Hogan at G7 Agriculture Ministers Meeting - Plenary Session 2

**24<sup>th</sup> April 2016, Niigata, Japan**

- Check Against Delivery –

- Ministers,
- My thanks for your contributions yesterday, which outlined very neatly the road we have travelled and the road ahead. My sincere thanks also to the Japanese presidency for the themes you have prioritised during this session, and the efficient way you have conducted this meeting.
- I recently spoke at a Brussels event on the future of agriculture. One of the other speakers that day, UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner pointed out that the 17 goals outlined in Agenda 2030 are effectively “a Declaration of Interdependence”.

- I think this phrase perfectly sums up what is at stake, and the challenge before us.
- If we want to achieve a healthy planet, with healthy people, we must recognise this interdependence and reflect it in our work. Yesterday, we outlined the framework for this Declaration of Interdependence. Today we are tasked with providing a little more detail and a little more colour to the Declaration.
- The four main international agreements of 2015 - Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development; the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on financing for development; the Paris COP 21 Climate Agreement; and the Nairobi WTO agreement - set the framework for sustainable development for years to come.
- The EU played a leading role in all these agreements, therefore I would like to elaborate on the European point of view, and provide a few concrete examples of where we believe our efforts should be focused.

***(Policy example 1: Promoting private sector investment in Developing Countries)***

- **Firstly, the G7 members must empower developing countries to be a part of the solution.**
- The Addis Ababa Action Agenda, which sets out a roadmap for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, makes clear that developing countries must take the first responsibility for their own development.
- Development aid can assist, and while it remains important, it is not enough. The private sector has the resources to transform the agricultural economy of developing countries, if it is leveraged in a smart and responsible way.
- Rural poverty is a root cause of irregular migration and often the origin of conflict. In some cases it is because of agricultural policy failures that humanitarian and emergency responses are needed.

- So what is required is a rural transformation, from the grassroots up. The statistics support this case:
- The population of sub Saharan Africa will grow from 1 billion to 1.4 billion by 2030. Of this number, 60-70% are rural and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods.
- Some 330 million young sub Saharan Africans will reach employment age in the next 15 years. That is equivalent to the current population of the United States.
- **So this is not an issue for the future: we are called to action now.**
- Under SDG2, there is an onus on all parties to "make markets work". This means galvanising responsible private investment in developing countries, and promoting smart, sustainable and profitable farming practices.

- There is a clear need to persuade agri-businesses to enter into partnerships with developing country farmers' organisations to invest, innovate and improve. Naturally, any such investments must be responsible and avoid land grabbing and unfair commercial practices.
- Just before World Food Day last year, the EU, in collaboration with African Union Commissioner Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, launched a process to reach out to European agri-businesses and persuade them to invest in African agricultural growth. We are hopeful that this will play a part in achieving the rural economic transformation required in Africa.
- We launched this process in the EU but we can do even more in this forum. Collective G7 actions like the agreed *Forum on Investment in the Agri-Food Sector*, especially as it relates to developing countries, are a step in the right direction.
- There is a need for practical experience to be shared, to see how responsible investments work on the ground, and what kind of financing instruments work best.

- How can we create a better pro-business regulatory environment? How can we ensure compliance burdens are manageable? How can we empower women to lead in the sector? These are some of the key policy elements we need to address.

***(Policy example 2: Research and Innovation )***

- As a second, related example, I'd like to talk about research and innovation and what they can do as part of our Declaration of Interdependence. In the EU, we have already taken a number of important steps towards giving agricultural research and innovation a priority status.
- In 2013, the EU decided to double its investment in Horizon 2020, the flagship EU programme for research and innovation. We have also made knowledge and innovation a central plank of our rural development policy.
- Just before that, in 2012, the European Innovation partnership for agriculture productivity and sustainability (or "EIP-AGRI") was launched to bridge the gap between research and practice.

- Our responsibility now is to make these instruments deliver, and provide solutions for the challenges that agriculture, forestry and rural areas are facing, up to 2020 and beyond.
- Having come this far, it is time to take the next steps on the journey.
- Farmers must be empowered to embrace research and innovation, working in collaboration with scientists and investors to generate knowledge at an early stage. The EIP-AGRI provides a promising vehicle for achieving this goal.
- It is important to understand that there is more to this concept than science and technology-driven innovation. The EU concept is broader, incorporating processes and social innovation.
- There is a need to go beyond the “lab to practice approach” and move towards an open, interactive innovation. This must include and empower farmers and other key stakeholders. Developing new knowledge and know-how in the sector must serve farmers' needs.

- We believe that by prioritising these areas, and developing new structures to improve our cooperation, our domestic and international agendas will be well served.
- By adopting this approach, the G7 can take a stronger leadership role in making Agenda 2030 a reality. Thank you.